

OUR LORD IN THE VALLEY OF HUMILIATION

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A SERMON
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*“And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself,
and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”
Philippians 2:8*

PAUL wishes to unite the saints in Philippi in the holy bands of love. To do this, he takes them to the cross. Beloved, there is a cure for every spiritual disease in the cross. There is food for every spiritual virtue in the Savior. We never go to Him too often. He is never a dry well or a vine from which every cluster has been taken. We do not think enough of Him. We are poor because we do not go to the gold country which lies round the cross.

We are often sad because we do not see the bright light that shines from the constellation of the cross. The beams from that constellation would give us instantaneous joy and rest if we perceived them. If any lover of the souls of men would do for them the best possible service, he would constantly take them near to Christ. Paul is always doing so, and he is doing it here.

The apostle knew that to create concord, you need first to beget lowliness of mind. Men do not quarrel when their ambitions have come to an end. When each one is willing to be least, when everyone desires to place his fellows higher than himself, there is an end to party spirit, schisms and divisions are all passed away.

Now, in order to create lowliness of mind, Paul, under the teaching of the Spirit of God, spoke about the lowliness of Christ. He would have us go down, and so he takes us to see our Master going down. He leads us to those steep stairs down which the Lord of glory took His lowly way, and he bids us stop while, in the words of our text, he points us to the lowly Christ, “Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”

Before Paul thus wrote, he had indicated, in a word or two, the height from which Jesus originally came. He says of Him, “Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.” You and I can have no idea of how high an honor it is to be equal with God! How can we therefore, measure the descent of Christ, when our highest thoughts cannot comprehend the height from which He came? The depth to which He descended is immeasurably below any point we have ever reached, and the height from which He came is inconceivably above our highest thoughts.

Do not however, forget the glory that Jesus laid aside for a while. Remember that He is very God of very God, and that He dwelt in the highest heaven with His Father. But yet, though He was thus infinitely rich, for our sakes He became poor, that we, through His poverty, might be rich.

The apostle, having mentioned what Jesus was, by another stroke of his pen reveals Him in our human nature. He says concerning Him that, “He made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.” A great marvel is that Incarnation, that the eternal God should take into union with Himself our human nature, and should be born at Bethlehem, and live at Nazareth, and die at Calvary on our behalf.

But our text does not speak so much of the humiliation of Christ in becoming man, as of His humiliation after He took upon Himself our nature. “Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself.” He never seems to stop in His descent until He comes to the lowest point, obedience unto death, and that death the most shameful of all, “even the death of the cross.”

Said I not rightly, that as you cannot reach the height from which He came, you cannot fathom the depth to which He descended? Here, in the immeasurable distance between the heaven of His glory and the shame of His death, is room for your gratitude. You may rise on wings of joy, you may dive into depths of self-denial, but in neither case will you reach the experience of your divine Lord, who thus, for you, came from heaven to earth, that He might take you up from earth to heaven.

Now, if strength is given me for the exercise, I want to guide you, first, while we consider *the facts of our Lord's humiliation*, and secondly, when we have considered them, I want you *practically to learn from them, some useful lessons*.

I. First of all, CONSIDER THE FACTS OF OUR LORD'S HUMILIATION.

Paul speaks first of *the point from which He still descends*, "Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself." My gracious Lord, You have come far enough already, do You not stop where You are? In the form of God, You were; in the form of man, You are. That is an unspeakable stoop. Will You still humble Yourself? Yes, says the text, "Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself."

Yet, surely one would have thought that He was low enough! He was the Creator, and we see Him here on earth as a creature, the Creator, who made heaven and earth, without whom was not anything made that was made, and yet He lies in the virgin's womb, He is born and He is cradled where the horned oxen feed. The Creator is also a creature. The Son of God is the Son of man. Strange combination! Could condescension go farther than for the Infinite to be joined to the infant, and the Omnipotent to the feebleness of a newborn babe?

Yet, this is not all. If the Lord of life and glory must needs be married to a creature, and the High and Mighty One must take upon Himself the form of a created being, yet why does He assume the form of man? There were other creatures brighter than the stars, noble spiritual beings, seraphim and cherubim, sons of the morning, presence angels of the eternal throne, why did He not take their nature? If He must be in union with a creature, why not be joined to the angels? But "He took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham."

A man is but a worm, a creature of many infirmities. On His brow death has written with his terrible finger. He is corruptible and he must die. Will the Christ take that nature upon Him, that He too, must suffer and die? It was even so, but when He had come so far, we feel as if we must almost put ourselves in the way to stop Him from going farther. Is not this stoop low enough? The text says that it was not, for "Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself," even then.

What will not Christ do for us who have been given to Him by His Father? There is no measure to His love, you cannot comprehend His grace. Oh, how we ought to love Him and serve Him! The lower He stoops to save us, the higher we ought to lift Him in our adoring reverence. Blessed be His name. He stoops, and stoops, and stoops, and when He reaches our level and becomes man, He still stoops, and stoops, and stoops lower and deeper yet, "Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself."

Now let us notice next, *the way in which He descended after He became a man*, "He humbled himself." We must assume that He has stooped as low as our humanity, but His humanity might have been, when born, cradled daintily. He might have been among those who are born in marble halls, and clothed in purple and fine linen, but He chose not to be. If it had pleased Him, He might have been born a man, and not have been a child, He might have leaped over the period of gradual development from childhood to youth, and from youth to manhood, but He did not.

When you see Him at home at Nazareth, the apprenticed son, obedient to His parents, doing the little errands of the house like any other child, you say as our text says, "He humbled himself." There He dwelt in poverty with His parents, beginning His life as a workman's boy, and I suppose, running out to play with youthful companions. All this is very wonderful.

The apocryphal gospels represent Him as having done strange things while yet a child, but the true Gospels tell us very little of His early days. He veiled His Godhead behind His childhood. When He went up to Jerusalem, and listened to the doctors of the law, though He astonished them by His questions and answers, yet He went home with His parents and was subject to them, for "He humbled

himself.” He was by no means pushing and forward, like a petted and precocious child. He held Himself in, for He determined that, being found in fashion as a man, He would humble Himself.

He grew up, and the time of His appearing unto men arrived, but I cannot pass over the thirty years of His silence without feeling that here was a marvelous instance of how He humbled Himself. I know young men who think that two or three years’ education is far too long for them. They want to be preaching at once, running away, as I sometimes tell them, like chickens with the shell on their heads. They want to go forth to fight before they have buckled on their armor.

But it was not so with Christ, thirty long years passed over His head, and still there was no Sermon on the Mount. When He did show Himself to the world, see how He humbled Himself. He did not knock at the door of the high priests, or seek out the eminent Rabbis and the learned scribes, but He took for His companions fishermen from the lake, infinitely His inferiors, even if we regarded Him merely as a man. He was full of manly freshness and vigor of mind, and they were scarcely able to follow Him, even though He moderated His footsteps out of pity for their weakness. He preferred to associate with lowly men, for He humbled Himself.

When He went out to speak, His style was not such as aimed at the gathering together of the *elite* together, He did not address a few specially cultured folk. “*Then drew near unto him all the scribes and Pharisees for to hear him.*” Am I quoting correctly? Nay, nay, “*Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him.*” They made an audience with which He was at home, and when they gathered about Him, and when little children stood to listen to Him, then He poured out the fullness of His heart, for He humbled Himself.

Ah, dear friends, this was not the deepest humiliation of the Lord Jesus! He allowed the devil to tempt Him. I have often wondered how His pure and holy mind, how His right royal nature could bear conflict with the prince of darkness, the foul fiend, full of lies. Christ allowed Satan to put Him to the test, and spotless purity had to bear the nearness of infamous villainy. Jesus conquered, for the prince of this world came, and found nothing in Him, but He humbled Himself when in the wilderness, on the pinnacle of the temple, and on the exceedingly high mountain, He allowed the devil thrice to assail Him.

Personally, in His body, He suffered weakness, hunger, thirst. In His mind He suffered rebuke, contumely, falsehood. He was constantly the Man of sorrows. You know that when the head of the apostate church is called, “the man of sin,” it is because it is always sinning, and when Christ is called “the Man of sorrows” it is because He was always sorrowing.

How amazing it is that He should humble Himself so as to be afflicted with the common sorrows of our humanity, yet it was even so! “Being found in fashion as a man,” He consented even to be belied, to be called a drunken man and a winebibber, to have His miracles ascribed to the help of Beelzebub, to hear men say, “He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him?”

“He humbled himself.” In His own heart there were frequently great struggles, and those struggles drove Him to prayer. He even lost consciousness of God’s presence, so that He cried in sore anguish, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” All this was because still He humbled Himself.

I do not know how to speak to you upon this great subject, I give you words, but I pray the Holy Spirit to supply you with right thoughts about this great mystery. I have already said that it was condescension enough for Christ to be found in fashion as a man, but after that, He still continued to descend the stairway of condescending love by humbling Himself yet more and more.

But notice now, *the rule of His descent*, it is worth noticing, “He humbled himself, and became obedient.” I have known persons try to humble themselves by will-worship. I have stood in the cell of a monk, when he has been out of it, and I have seen the whip with which he flagellated himself every night before he went to bed. I thought that it was quite possible that the man deserved all he suffered, and so I shed no tears over it. That was his way of humbling himself, by administering a certain number of lashes.

I have known persons practice voluntary humility. They have talked in very humble language, and have decried themselves in words, though they have been as proud as Lucifer all the while. Our Lord’s

way of humbling Himself was by obedience. He invented no method of making Himself ridiculous, He put upon Himself no singular garb which would attract attention to His poverty, He simply obeyed His Father, and mark you, there is no humility like obedience, “To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.”

To obey is better than to wear a special dress or to clip your words in some peculiar form of supposed humility. Obedience is the best humility, laying yourself at the feet of Jesus, and making your will active only when you know what is God’s will for you. This is to be truly humble.

In what way, then, did the Lord Jesus Christ in His life obey? I answer—There was always about Him the spirit of obedience to His Father. He could say, “Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.” He was always, while here, subservient to His Father’s great purpose in sending Him to earth, He came to do the will of Him that sent Him, and to finish His work. He learned what that will was, partly from Holy Scripture.

You constantly find Him acting in a certain way “that the scripture might be fulfilled.” He shaped His life upon the prophecies that had been given concerning Him. Thus He did the will of the Father.

Also, there was within Him the Spirit of God who led and guided Him, so that He could say, “I do always those things that please the Father.” Then He waited upon God continually in prayer. Though infinitely better able to do without prayer than we are, yet He prayed much more than we do. With less need than we have, He had a greater delight in prayer than we have, and thus He learned the will of God as man, and did it, without once omitting, or once transgressing in a single point.

He did the will of God also obediently, by following out what He knew to be the Father’s great design in sending Him. He was sent to save, and He went about saving, seeking and saving that which was lost. Oh, dear friends, when we get into unison with God, when we wish what He wishes, when we live for the great object that fills God’s heart, when we lay aside our wishes and whims, and even our lawful desires, that we may do only the will of God, and live only for His glory, then we shall be truly humbling ourselves!

Thus, I have shown you that Jesus did descend after He became man, and I have pointed out to you the way and the rule of His descending. Now let us look with awe and reverence, at *the abyss into which He descended*. Where did He arrive at length in that dreadful descent? What was the bottom of the abyss? It was death, “He humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”

Our Lord died willingly. You and I, unless the Lord should come quickly, will die, whether we are willing or not, “It is appointed unto men once to die.” He needed not to die, yet He was willing to surrender His life. He said, “I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.”

He died willingly, but at the same time, He did not die by His own hand, He did not take His own life as a suicide, He died obediently. He waited till His hour had come, when He was able to say, “It is finished,” then He bowed His head and gave up the ghost. He humbled Himself, so as willingly to die.

He proved the obedience of His death also by the meekness of it, as Isaiah said, “As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.” He never spoke a bitter word to priest or scribe, Jewish governor or Roman soldier. When the women wept and bewailed, He said to them, “Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.” He was all gentleness, He had not a hard word even for His murderers. He gave Himself up to be the Sin-bearer, without murmuring at His Father’s will, or at the cruelty of His adversaries.

How patient He was! If He says, “I thirst,” it is not the petulant cry of a sick man in His fever, there is a royal dignity about Christ’s utterance of the words. Even the “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani,” with the unutterable gall and bitterness it contains, has not even a trace of impatience mingled with it. Oh, what a death Christ’s was! He was obedient in it, obedient not only till He came to die, but obedient in that last dread act. His obedient life embraced the hour of His departure.

But as if death were not sufficiently humbling, the apostle adds, “even the death of the cross.” That was the worst kind of death. It was a violent death. Jesus fell not asleep gently, as good men often do,

whose end is peace. No, He died by murderous hands. Jews and Gentiles combined, and with cruel hands took Him, and crucified and slew Him.

It was also an extremely painful death of lingering agony. Those parts of the body in which the nerves were most numerous, were pierced with rough iron nails. The weight of the body was made to hang upon the tenderest part of the frame. No doubt the nails tore their cruel way through His flesh while He was hanging on the tree. A cut in the hand has often resulted in lockjaw and death, yet Christ's hands were nailed to the cross. He died in most exquisite pain of body and of soul.

It was also a death most shameful. Thieves were crucified with Him, His adversaries stood and mocked Him. The death of the cross was one reserved for slaves and the basest of felons, no Roman citizen could be put to death in such a way as that, hung up between earth and heaven, as if neither would have Him, rejected of men and despised of God.

It was also a penal death. He died not like a hero in battle, nor as one who perishes while rescuing his fellow men from fire or flood, He died as a criminal. Upon the cross of Calvary He was hung up. It was an accursed death too. God Himself had called it so, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." He was made a curse for us. His death was penal in the highest sense. He "bare our sins in his own body on the tree."

I have not the mental, nor the physical, nor the spiritual strength to speak to you aright on such a wondrous topic as that of our Lord in the Valley of Humiliation. There have been times with me when I have only wanted a child's finger to point me to the Christ, and I have found enough in a sight of Him without any words of man. I hope that it is so with you tonight. I invite you to sit down and watch your Lord, obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. All this He did that He might complete His own humiliation. He humbled Himself even to this lowest point of all, "unto death, even the death of the cross."

II. If you have this picture clearly before your eyes, I want you in the second place, to PRACTICALLY LEARN SOME LESSONS FROM OUR LORD'S HUMILIATION.

The first is, learn to have *firmness of faith* in the atoning sacrifice. If my Lord could stoop to become man, and if when He had come as low as that, He went still lower, and lower, and lower, until He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, I feel that there must be a potency about that death which is all that I can require. Jesus by dying has vindicated law and justice.

Look, brethren, if God can punish sin upon His own dear Son, it means far more than the sending of us to hell. Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin, but His blood was shed, so there is remission. His wounds let out His life blood, one great gash opened the way to His heart, before that, His whole body had become a mass of dripping gore, when in the garden, His sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground.

My Lord, when I study Your sacrifice, I see how God can be "just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Faith is born at the cross of Christ. We not only bring faith to the cross, but we find it there. I cannot think of my God bearing all this grief in a human body, even to the death on the cross, and then doubt. Why, doubt becomes harder than faith when the cross is visible! When Christ is set forth evidently crucified among us, each one of us should cry, "Lord, I believe, for Thy death has killed my unbelief."

The next lesson I would have you learn from Christ's humiliation is this, cultivate a great *hatred of sin*. Sin killed Christ, let Christ kill sin. Sin made Him go down, down, down, then pull sin down, let it have no throne in your heart. If it *will* live in your heart, make it live in holes and corners, and never rest till it is utterly driven out. Seek to put your foot upon its neck, and utterly kill it. Christ was crucified, let your lusts be crucified, and let every wrong desire be nailed up with Christ, upon the felon's tree.

If, with Paul, you can say, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world," with Him you will also be able to exclaim, "From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." Christ's branded slave is the Lord's freeman.

Learn another lesson, and that is *obedience*. Beloved, if Christ humbled Himself and became obedient, how obedient ought you and I to be? We ought to stop at nothing when we once know that it is the Lord's will. I marvel that you and I should ever raise a question or ask a moment's delay in our obedience to Christ. If it be the Lord's will, let it be done, and done at once. Should it rend some fond connection, should it cause a flood of tears, let it be done.

He humbled Himself and became obedient. Would obedience humble me? Would it lower me in man's esteem? Would it make me the subject of ridicule? Would it bring contempt upon my honorable name? Should I be elbowed out of the society wherein I have been admired, if I were obedient to Christ? Lord, this is a question not worth the asking! I take up Your cross right joyfully, asking grace to be perfectly obedient by the power of Your Spirit.

Learn next another lesson, and that is *self-denial*. Did Christ humble Himself? Come, brothers and sisters, let us practice the same holy art. Have I not heard of some saying, "I have been insulted, I am not treated with proper respect. I go in and out, and I am not noticed. I have done eminent service and there is not a paragraph in the newspaper about me."

Oh, dear friend, your Master humbled Himself, but it seems to me that you are trying to exalt yourself! Truly, you are on the wrong track. If Christ went down, down, down, it ill becomes us to be always seeking to go up, up, up. Wait till God exalts you, which He will do in His own good time.

Meanwhile, it behooves you, while you are here, to humble yourself. If you are already in a humble position, should you not be contented with it, for He humbled Himself? If you are now in a place where you are not noticed, where there is little thought of you, be quite satisfied with it. Jesus came just where you are, you may well stop where you are, where God has put you. Jesus had to bring Himself down, and to make an effort to come down to where you are.

Is not the Valley of Humiliation one of the sweetest spots in all the world? Does not the great geographer of the heavenly country, John Bunyan, tell us that the Valley of Humiliation is as fruitful a place as any the crow flies over, and that our Lord formerly had His country house there, and that He loved to walk those meadows, for He found the air was pleasant? Stop there, brother.

"I should like to be known," says one. "I should like to have my name before the public." Well, if you ever had that lot, if you felt as I do, you would pray to be unknown, and to let your name drop out of notice, for there is no pleasure in it. The only happy way seems to me, if God would only let us choose, is to be known to nobody, and to glide through this world as pilgrims and strangers, to the land where our true kindred dwell, and to be known there as having been followers of the Lord.

I think that we should also learn from our Lord's humiliation to have *contempt for human glory*. Suppose they come to you and said, "We will crown you king!" you may well say, "Will you? All the crown you had for my Master was a crown of thorns, I will not accept a diadem from you." "We will praise you." "What, will you praise me, you who spat in His dear face? I need none of your praises."

It is a greater honor to a Christian man to be maligned than to be applauded. Ay, I do not care where it comes from, I will say this, if he be slandered and abused for Christ's sake, no odes in his honor, no articles in his praise, can do him one-tenth the honor. This is to be a true knight of the cross, to have been wounded in the fray, to have come back adorned with scars for His dear sake. O despised one, look upon human glory as a thing that is tarnished, no longer golden, but corroded because it came not to your Lord.

And O beloved, I think when we have meditated on this story of Christ's humbling Himself, we ought to feel our *love to our Lord* growing very vehement! We do not half love Him as we ought. When I read the sentences of Bernard, half Romanist, but altogether saint, I feel as if I had not begun to love my Lord, and when I turn over Rutherford's letters, and see the glow of his heart toward his divine Master, I could smite on my breast to think that I have such a heart of stone where there ought to be a heart of flesh.

If you hear George Herbert sing his quaint, strange poetry, suffused with love for his dear Lord, you may well think that you are a tyro in the school of love. Ay, and if you ever drink in the spirit of McChayne, you may go home, and hide your head and say, “I am not worthy to sing—

“Jesu, lover of my soul,”

for I do not return His love as I ought to do.” Come, seek His wounds, and let your hearts be wounded. Come, look to His heart that poured out blood and water, and give your heart up to Him. Put your whole being among the sweet spices of His all-sufficient merit, set all on fire with burning affection, and let the fragrance of it go up like incense before the Lord.

Lastly, let us be inflamed with a strong *desire to honor Christ*. If He humbled Himself, let us honor Him. Every time that He seems to put away the crown, let us put it on His head. Every time we hear Him slandered—and men continue to slander Him still—let us speak up for Him right manfully.

*“Ye that are men, now serve Him,
Against unnumbered foes;
Your courage rise with danger,
And strength to strength oppose.”*

Do you not grow indignant sometimes, when you see how Christ’s professed church is treating Him and His truth? They are still shutting Him out till His head is wet with dew, and His locks with the drops of the night. Proclaim Him King in the face of His false friends. Proclaim Him, and say that His Word is infallibly true, and that His precious blood alone can cleanse from sin. Stand out the braver because so many Judases seem to have leaped up from the bottomless pit to betray Christ again. Be firm and steadfast, like granite walls, in the day when others turn their backs and fly, like cravens.

The Lord help you to honor Him who humbled Himself, who became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross! May He accept these humble words of mine, and bless them to His people, and make them to be the means of leading some poor sinner to come and trust in Him! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

PHILIPPIANS 2:1-18

Verses 1-2. *If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.*

Paul did not mean to doubt that there is “any consolation in Christ, any comfort of love, any fellowship of the Spirit, any bowels and mercies,” for no one knew better than he did how those blessings abound to them that are in Christ Jesus.

He put it by way of argument. If there be consolation in Christ, since there is consolation in Christ, since there is comfort of love, since there is fellowship of the Spirit, be one in Christ, be not divided, love one another, “be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.”

3. *Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory;*

“Nothing,” never give to exceed other givers. Never preach that you may be a better preacher than anybody else, never work in the Sunday school with the idea of being thought a very successful teacher. “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory.”

3. *But in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.*

There is some point in which your friend excels you. Notice that rather than the point in which you excel him. Try to give him the higher seat, seek for yourself to take the lowest room.

4. *Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.*

Have a large heart, so that, though you care for yourself in spiritual things, and desire your own soul-prosperity, you may have the same desire for every other Christian man or woman.

5. *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:*

What an example we have set before us in the Lord Jesus Christ! We are to have the mind of Christ, and that in the most Christly way, for here we have Christ set out to the life—

6. *Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:*

For He was equal with God.

7. *But made himself of no reputation,—*

Emptied himself of all his honor, of all his glory, of all his majesty, and of all the reverence paid to him by the holy spirits around the throne.

7-8. *And took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself,—*

He had not descended low enough yet, though He had come down all the way from the Godhead to our manhood, “he humbled himself.”

8-9. *And became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him,—*

He stooped, who can tell how low? He was raised, who shall tell how high? “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him.”

9. *And given him a name which is above every name:*

He threw away His name, He emptied Himself of His reputation. How high is His reputation now! How glorious is the name that God hath given Him as the reward of His redemptive work!

10-11. *That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Now is He higher than the highest. Now every one must confess His divinity. With shame and terror, His adversaries shall bow before Him, with delight and humble adoration, His friends shall own Him Lord of all, “that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” See how the greatest glory of Christ is the glory of the Father. He never desired any other Glory but that. The highest honor you can ever have, O child of God, is to bring honor to your Father who is in heaven! Do you not think so? I know you do.

12. *Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.*

Get out of self! Work out your salvation from pride, from vainglory, from disputations and strife.

13. *For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

You may very well work out what God works in. If He does not work it in, you will never work it out, but while He works within your spirit both to will and to do, you may safely go on to will and to do, for your willing and your doing will produce lowliness of spirit, and unity of heart with your brethren.

14. *Do all things without murmurings and disputings:*

Do not say, “You give me too much to do, you always give me the hard work, you put me in the obscure corner.” No, no, “do all things without murmurings.” And do not begin fighting over a holy work, for if you do, you spoil it in the very beginning, and how can you then hope for a blessing upon it? “Do all things without murmurings and disputings.”

15. *That ye may be blameless and harmless,—*

None finding fault with you, and you not finding fault with others, neither harming nor harmed, “blameless and harmless.”

15. *The sons of God, without rebuke,—*

So that men cannot rebuke you, and will have to invent a lie before they can do it, and even then the falsehood is too palpable to have any force in it, “without rebuke.”

15. *In the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;*

You cannot straighten them, but you can shine. They would destroy you if they could, but all you have to do is to shine. If Christian men would give more attention to their shining, and pay less attention to the crooked and perverse generation, much more would come of it. But now we are advised to “keep abreast of the times,” and to “catch the spirit of the age.” If I could ever catch that spirit, I would hurl it into the bottomless abyss, for it is a spirit that is antagonistic to Christ in all respects. We are just to keep clear of all that, and “shine as lights in the world.”

16. *Holding forth the word of life;*

You are to hold forth the Word of life as men hold forth a torch. Your shining is largely to consist in holding forth the Word of life.

16. *That I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.*

God’s ministers cannot bear the thought of having labored in vain, and yet if some of us were to die, what would remain of all we have done? I charge you, brethren, to think of what your life work has been hitherto. Will it remain? Will it abide? Will it stand the test of your own departure? Ah, if you have any fear about it, you may well go to God in prayer and cry, “Establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands, establish thou it.” Paul cared much about God’s work, but he did not trouble about himself.

17. *Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.*

If he might be poured forth as a drink offering on their behalf, or offered up as a whole burnt offering in the service of the Savior, he would be glad. He could not bear to have lived in vain, but to spend his life for the glory of his Lord, would be ever a joy to him.

18. *For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me.*

To live and to die for Jesus Christ, with the blessing of the Father resting upon us, is a matter for us to joy in unitedly and continually. God help us so to do!

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—284, 294, 819

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